



European Commission

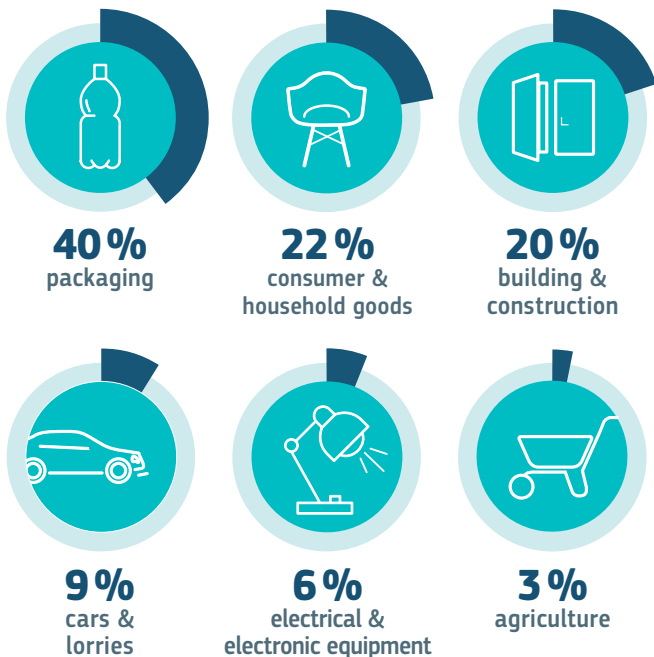


Changing the way we use plastics

It's light, it's cheap, it's everywhere and we can't live without it. Plastic is fantastic, but it has serious downsides as well. It's time to rethink plastic, and ask some tricky questions.

- How can we get away from single-use plastics?
- Can we make recycling it easier?
- And how can we stop plastic from ending up where it doesn't belong?

EUROPE PRODUCES A HUGE AMOUNT OF PLASTIC: **58 MILLION TONNES** EVERY YEAR



Most of the raw material is fossil fuel based. Thus, if the current production trends continue, **by 2050** plastics could account for 20% of oil consumption, 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, and **there could be more plastics than fish in the sea.**

Source: PlasticsEurope.

EUROPE PRODUCES **25 MILLION TONNES** OF PLASTIC WASTE



Source: PlasticsEurope, 2014.

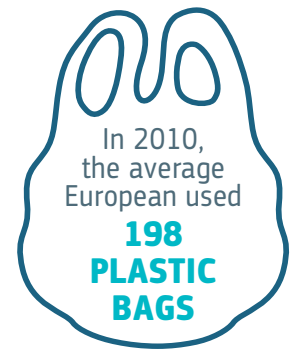
EU initiatives like higher recycling targets and more effective legislation for drinking water (cutting the need for bottled water) are improving the situation, but stronger action is needed.

More than 60% of plastic waste still comes from packaging, but only 40% of that packaging is recycled.

Sources: PlasticsEurope and Eurostat.

Plastic leakage

Plastics are very durable, so they accumulate in nature, damaging ecosystems we rely on. In the oceans they break down into tiny fragments, which enter the food chain. The microplastics are eaten by plankton, which are eaten by fish, which are eaten by ... us.



Source: European Commission, 2013.

The 10 most common plastic objects found on European beaches



Source: Joint Research Centre report.

Many of these items are packaging for food and drink and most were designed to be used only once ('single-use plastics'). That's a waste of valuable resources.

It's time to rethink plastics

It's time to change the way we design, produce, use and dispose of them. Let's reinvent plastics!

The EU has a new strategy to address the whole life cycle of plastics. The aim is to make them:



We also need to stop using plastic where there are better alternatives available, and ensure that the plastics we use keep their economic value for as long as possible and don't end up in landfills.

By 2030, all plastic packaging placed on the EU market should be reusable or recyclable. As well as cutting the industry's carbon footprint, this will reduce plastic waste and marine litter, and slow the proliferation of microplastics.



**IN 2015
THE UNITED
KINGDOM
GENERATED
2260000
TONNES
OF PLASTIC
PACKAGING
WASTE**

Source: Eurobarometer.



United Kingdom



34.7 kg/person
of plastic
packaging waste
was generated
(2015)



39.4%
of plastic packaging
waste was recycled
(2015)



EU average



31 kg/person
of plastic
packaging waste
was generated
(2014)



40%
of plastic packaging
waste was recycled
(2015)

What are you doing about plastic waste?



United Kingdom



EU average

Source: Eurobarometer.



76%

separate waste
for recycling



35%

avoid single-use goods
like cutlery & cups



26%

avoid buying
over-packaged products



92%

use fewer
single-use plastic bags

65%

34%

24%

75%

How would you tackle the plastic challenge?

Most Brits back measures to cut plastic waste. With 81% of Brits worried about the environmental impact of plastic, and 65% worried about its impact on their health, people have the drive to tackle the plastic challenge, but what do they think should be done?

Source: Eurobarometer.



96% think products should be designed to ease recycling.

95% think that industry and retailers should try to reduce plastic packaging.

93% think local authorities should provide more and better collection facilities for plastic waste.

96% think people should be educated on how to reduce their plastic waste.

69% think consumers should be charged more for single-use plastic goods like cutlery.

#PlasticsStrategy

#CircularEconomy

 https://twitter.com/EU_ENV

 <https://www.facebook.com/EUEnvironment>

 <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy>

 http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/plastic_waste.htm



Publications Office

Print	KH-02-18-003-EN-C	ISBN 978-92-79-80803-6	doi:10.2779/135969
PDF	KH-02-18-003-EN-N	ISBN 978-92-79-80804-3	doi:10.2779/235182

© European Union, 2018

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018.

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.